

A
SERMON
P R E A C H E D
Before the Right Honourable
T H E 27
Lord M A Y O R
A N D
A L D E R M E N
Of the C I T Y of
L O N D O N,
At the G U I L D - H A L L Chappel
Novem. xvi. 1679.

By THOMAS LYNFORD, A. M. and Fellow
of Christ-Colledge in CAMBRIDGE.

L O N D O N,
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in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1679.

И О М Я Г ?

СЛОВАРИ

To the Right Honourable
Sir ROBERT CLAYTON,
Lord MAYOR
of the CITY of
LONDON.

May it please your Lordship,

WHosoever vouchsafes to read
the following Discourse, may
have just Reason to conclude that Your
Lordships particular Command to have it
Printed, proceeds rather from Your
being Pleas'd with the Subject thereof
than with the Skill of the Preacher in the
management of it. However since to per-
suade and encourage men to be Quiet and
Peaceable, seems to be a Design both
Honest and at this time Necessary to be
undertaken, I shall be glad if at the Ex-
pence of my own Reputation, I can prove

The Epistle Dedicatory.

so Happy as to afford an Hint to others to endeavour the same with greater Art and better Arguments: but what need of either? since Your Lordship as well as the rest of our Governors, notwithstanding our Fears and Jealousies, notwithstanding the Secret Designs of some, and the Factious Spirits of others, have nevertheless by Your Wisdom and Prudent managery of Affairs hitherto preserved Peace amongst us. That God will Bless Your Lordship with the same Success for the future, and that during Your Lordships Government, no Contrivances of wicked and turbulent men, upon what pretence soever, may be able to disturb the Quiet of this Great and Famous City; Is the Hearty Prayer of

MY LORD,

Your Lordships

Very Humble Servant,

THO. LINFORD.

A
S E R M O N
P R E A C H E D
Before the Lord *MAYOR.*

2 CHRON. XX. 17.

*Set your selves, stand ye still, and see the
Salvation of the Lord with you.*

THE Words are part of a message brought from God by the Prophet *Jahaziel* to the people of *Judah*, when they were under dreadful apprehensions of being ruined by their enemies, and therefore may not be improper for our meditation in these dayes of trouble and danger, if by comparing our Condition with theirs we can make it evident that as our Circumstances have been much alike, so has our behaviour under them. As for their circumstances, if we look into the beginning of this *Chapter*, we shall find them to be bad enough. *Moab* and *Ammon* are up in Arms against them,

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and the children of Mount *Seir* joyn the confederacy; A vast Army is marching towards their borders, and what could be expected from such an Idolatrous crew but the utter Ruine of their Church and State? It had without question not a little disgusted the Priests of *Moloch* that their Groves were cut down, and it had vex'd the *Jesuits* of *Baal-peor* to see *Jehosaphat* walk in the steps of his father *Asa*; they were enraged to see the Reformation go on still, and therefore that they might put a stop to the progress of so good a work, they resolv'd to call in the assistance of a Foreign force, for having perfwaded the Princes of *Moab* and *Ammon* that *Jehosaphat* being a despiser of their Gods and Religion, a meer Heretick, he might lawfully be deposed, and that nothing could tend so much as his and his peoples destruction to the advancement of the Catholick, which was Heathenish cause, by their cunning arts and contrivances they at la't prevailed with them and others to unite in a holy league against him. And now who can better describe the sad distraction of poor *Judah* than we our selves, who have been in as great fears of the like destruction? Were their Estates & Fortunes, their Priviledges and Immunities, their Lives and Liberties in jeopardy, so have Ours been? Was the Religion of the True God in danger of being utterly abolished amongst them? Why,

the Heathen were about to have entred into our Sanctuary, and our *Jerusalem* was like to have been made a heap of stones : Were they afraid of the Restauration of Idols ? who amongst us has not dreaded the setting up again of Pictures and Images, and having Bread and Wafers made the objects of Divine worship ? Were they afflicted to consider that their children must be sacrificed in the fire to *Moloch* ? we our selves have had as dreadful apprehensions of more severe burnings : To enlarge the parallel a little further ; consider that the enemies of *Judah* were such as had been much obliged by them ; had received from them large tokens of love and friendship, which makes *Jehosaphat* in his prayer to God cry out ; *Behold how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession which thou hast given us to inherit.* And may not we with the same reason complain that it is not an open enemy who has done us the wrong, but they are our companions, our own familiar friends, our country-men, our relations who have intended us this great mischief. Who have liv'd with greater security and satisfaction than they have done ? Who have receiv'd more favours from our good *Jehosaphat* ? and yet these are the men who *Plot* his and our destruction ; these are they who take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed. In respect then of our present

circumstances you see the message of the Prophet would be welcome to us: But we can by no means pretend to deserve it, unless in the second place we make it appear, that as our condition is the same, so has been our behaviour also. How they behaved themselves we read in the 3d and 4th verses of this Chapter. *And Jeho-saphat feared and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah; and Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord, even out of all the Cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord:* and thus far we seem to have gone along with them, we have proclaimed Fasts as well as they, we have met publickly to invoke God Almighty's protection as well as they; but we are not to suppose this was all they did, they rent their hearts as well as they did their garments, they put on Righteousness as well as Sack-cloth and ashes, and they firmly purpos'd to glorifie God in their lives and conversations as well as in their Hymns and Praises; had not God known the sincerity of their hearts and intentions he would never have worked so strange a deliverance for them, nor can we ever expect the like assistance unless our repentance prove as real as theirs was. Has then the sense of God's approaching judgments begot within us a sense of our sins? has the Discovery of the Plot made us lay open our Transgressions in the presence of

Almighty God? has the misery likely to happen to our Nation caused us heartily to bewail our iniquities in his sight? has our inability to withstand the cunning devices of our enemies engaged us to make him our only trust and confidence? has the punishments justly inflicted upon notorious Traitors taught us to mortifie our lusts and affections? In a word have we already begun to amend our lives, and are we thoroughly resolved to live soberly and virtuously for the time to come? We may then be bold to make use of the words of the Prophet for our comfort and consolation, let us *set our selves, let us stand still, and we shall see the salvation of the Lord.*

From which words I shall raiſe these three Heads of discourse.

First, That since our Enemies designs are known to us, we ought to *set our selves*, that is, make what provision we can against them. I.

Secondly, That having thus *set our selves*, we must then *stand still*, that is, do nothing which is unlawful, although it be for our own preservation. II.

Thirdly, That our Repentance being suppos'd, and we thus setting our selves, and thus standing still, have great reason to hope that we shall *see the Salvation of the Lord.* III.

First, Let us set our selves. Although nothing is more certain than that God's Providence presides over all Humane affairs, and that nothing happens in the world but by his leave and permission; yet we are not to suppose that he has made us Rational creatures to no purpose, and that because he has sufficient power to do all things, we ought therefore to do nothing ourselves. By our understandings we are made capable of finding out Truth, and of making a distinction betwixt things good and evil, useful and unuseful, and by our wills we are enabled to make choice of such means as seem fit and proper for our present circumstances; and shall we make no use of these most excellent Faculties, and shall we like the slothful person in the Gospel hide our Lord's Talent in a Napkin, and because he is able, therefore conclude he is always willing to work Miracles for our preservation? We confess that being finite creatures we are not able to obtain any certainty about the event of things, because through ignorance and prejudice we sometimes pitch upon ways that are improper for the effecting what we intended, at other times the means whereby our design is to be brought about may perchance be out of our power, or the circumstances which are to be enquired into are so many and nume-

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rous that we shall be apt through forgetfulness, want of sufficient time and opportunity to let slip and take no notice of those which are most material and for our purpose. Besides we are to remember that God has reserved to himself a right of interposing in all affairs, so that notwithstanding all our art and cunning, notwithstanding all things seem in a hopeful way, yet we can never be sure they will happen as we would have them: because if he thinks fit he can after some hidden manner or perhaps most unlikely way blast all our designs, and bring things about contrary to our expectation; according to the words of the Wise man, *Prov. 16.ver. 9. A mans heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.* We may use much care and circumspection in the management of our affairs, but all in vain unless God think fit to crown our endeavours with success. The consideration of which things ought to banish out of our minds all manner of Pride or Self-conceit, engaging us more heartily to beg his Assistance, and more firmly to rely upon him in all our undertakings and distresses: but it ought to be no argument for us to sit idle and in the mean time believe that a bare reliance upon God in all our streights and difficulties, without any of our own endeavours, will be sufficient to bring us out of them: who would not blame those Mariners as foolish and absurd.

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who in the midst of a violent storm spent all their time in prayers but used no other means to preserve themselves, whereas had they been as industrious as they were devout, had they stirred themselves as they ought to have done, they might have saved their ship and themselves from ruine and destruction. There is a natural connexion between causes and effects, and the same cause if circumstances be in all respects alike, will always produce the same effects ; and since there are many ways of bringing the same end to pass, if we use care and industry nothing is more probable than that we shall light upon some of them ; neither will God interpose or go about to disappoint us when we act according to the dictates of that reason which he has implanted in our minds, unless it be for the sake of his own glory, our good, or the good of others. It is not the manner of a Being infinitely Perfect to act Arbitrarily, neither would it be agreeable to his Divine goodness, to hinder without any reason the success of such means as he himself has appointed for the accomplishing any design : and therefore we observe that evil men by being diligent and active prove often successful, and that on the other hand, a good cause is frequently spoiled by the ill management of those who undertake it ; so that if we expect any extraordinary assistance from God, we must be carefully

fully employ'd in the use of such ordinary means as are afforded us. What those means are it will be hard to determine, since all mens circumstances are not alike ; but to say something in general, we ought to learn wisdom from our enemies, and since they are so intent upon the ruine of the best Church, and best constituted Government in the world, it behoves us to be as active in the Defence of them ; we see by their restlessness and importunity how far they have prevail'd, and shall we still be asleep, and continue to express more indifference in the behalf of a Good Cause, than they have done Zeal for the sake of a Bad one ? How firmly are they united as one man against us ? and yet (what I grieve to mention) we seem never to have been more divided amongst our selves : the Nation (God be thanked) is so far awakened that we need not fear at present either a Massacre or an Invasion, but I am afraid they will at last undo us by our own Jealousies ; since they find themselves unlikely to prevail by any open force, their main design will be by fomenting differences to hinder any settlement amongst us, & unless we be aware of such their devilish practices, unless by a firm union one with another we *set our selves* against them, they will in a short time set us together by the Ears. What advantages of doing this they have, none can be ignorant who

have heard of their several Disguises under which they appear, and how handsomly they can comply with the humour of any party for the advancement of their own interest; what more easie than for them to insinuate into the minds of those who have long since been disaffected to the Church and Government, that the Plot goes on still, that the *Papists* have at present the management of the chiefest affairs, and that all the Clergy of *England* are Abettors of Popery and Arbitrary Government; whilst on the other hand they tell such whom they find Zealous for the Established Religion, Loyal to their King, and hearty Lovers of their Countrey, that the *Presbyterians* have begun to play their old game, and that all the Separatists have club'd together to rout out Episcopacy, and to subvert Monarchy; to which Insinuations if we add the number of Scandalous Pamphlets and Libels lately printed, of which it is much suspected the *Jesuits*, or those who own as bad principles have been the Authors, what can be less expected than that the Credulous multitude should entertain strange apprehensions of things, and that they who are the most Ignorant should become the most suspicious one of another? The Result of all which will be this, that Charity and brotherly affection will abate, on the contrary Heats and Animosities arise daily, and by

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by a continual quarrel of Protestants with Protestants, and the earnest striving of each Party to advance it self rather than the common interest of the Nation, the *Papists* will obtain the greatest advantage, which if we consider their present circumstances, they can at this time either desire or wish for: So that if we have any real concern for the welfare of our Country it seems to be the present duty of us all to strive to compose all differences, and according to the Apostles advice, to endeavour as much as in us lies Peace with all men. Let us not any longer be governed by Prejudice or Passion, but let us be willing to comply with any thing which is not unlawful, if it tends to the advantage of the Nation in general, although perhaps it is not so agreeable to our private interest or particular opinion; let all malice and anger be banished from amongst us, and let us be willing rather to hide than disclose our mutual infirmities: Let us not give credit to those many idle stories which we every day meet with, they being raised on purpose to amuse us and beget within our minds distrust each man of his neighbour: Let us candidly interpret the actions of our Governours, and be always instant with God in Prayer, that he would direct and bless them in all their undertakings; and being honestly busied in that station wherein we are

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placed, let us with patience and humility expect the event of things; but above all let us be careful that no argument whatsoever, not the malice and wickedness of our enemies, nor our own preservation it self ever perswade us to act any thing which is either contrary to the Laws of God or man: which is my second head of Discourse, contained in those words, *Let us stand still.*

I am not ignorant what great influence the principle of Self-preservation has upon all our actions, and did we seriously consider it with relation to another life, nothing could be of greater use to make us Religious and good. Had we but an eye to those things which will be hereafter, did we in all our undertakings act nothing but what would tend to our well-being in another world, we could never do amiss in this, God having made our duty to be our interest, never requiring any thing to be performed by us which helps not forward and promotes our eternal happiness: But our great mistake is that we dote too much upon these present enjoyments, and are too fond of the things of this world, by which means it comes to pass that we stretch this principle of preservation too far, and are often apt to conclude, that whatsoever seems fit and proper to work our present security, this we may lawfully and with a safe conscience do.

do. Now although our present danger may seem great enough, although Life, Fortunes and Religion should appear all to be at stake, and we can imagine within our selves, that if such and such courses were made use of we might perhaps escape; yet that we ought nevertheless to stand still, and make use of no means but such as are Honest and Lawful, I shall endeavour to evince from these following Considerations.

1. Consider, that by doing any unlawful action we deprive our selves of God's care and protection. His Providence as has been already hinted presides over all things, *In him we live and move and have our being.* *In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind,* and therefore we ought to be so wise as to contend for nothing more earnestly than to make him our friend; *For if he be on our side we need not fear what man can do unto us,* but on the other hand *unless the Lord keep the City the watch-man waketh but in vain:* Now how can we hope to obtain his good will and favour if we act contrary to those Precepts which he has given us to be the rule of all our actions? By doing any thing which is unlawful we contemn his Authority, and shake off that Allegiance which is due unto him, we are ingrateful for mercies received, we despise his Wisdom by preferring our own Sentiments before

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before his directions, we slight his Promises, and bid defiance to his Threats, and can we after all these affronts offer'd to an Almighty Being expect that he will appear on our behalf, or that, should he suffer our present wickednes to succeed as we would have it, he would not at one time or another take vengeance upon us and punish us severely either in this or another world? We may pretend God's glory and the advancement of Religion, but this will be but a lame excuse to justifie any disorderly undertaking; nothing being more præposterous than to imagine that True Religion may be lawfully upheld by sin and wickednes, that God and Belial may dwell together, and that the glory of an infinite, pure and holy Being ought to be advanced by the works of the Devil. He hath set us our bounds which we are not to pass; he hath shewn us what is good, and what doth the Lord require of us (*Mich. 6. 8.*) and from his Precepts we may get understanding (*Psal. 119. 104.*) to hate every evil way.

^{1 Sam. 15.} ^{22.} Obedience is better to him than Sacrifice, and he has often punish'd those who upon the most pious pretences have dared to engage in any wicked action; and therefore if we do the like we must resolve to rely upon our own strength, and expect no assistance from him, but run the hazard of having all our projects defeated, and our most

secret and (as we thought) most wise Counsels brought to none effect: Nothing being less to be expected than that God, who perceives the vileness of our hearts, and sees how ready we are to dwell upon the things of this life, and to prefer our present safety before Obedience to his laws, will for the vindication of his Honour and Authority in the world, make us a publick example, and by suffering us to be ruined by our enemies, procure Glory to himself, but after another manner than we intended.

2. Consider, that nothing can bring a greater scandal upon that Religion we profess, than for us to do any thing which is unlawful, although it be for our own preservation. All Sects and Parties do in all their undertakings pretend Piety, neither have any made greater boasts of advancing the Glory of God and of propagating the Christian Religion in its highest degree of perfection than the *Papists* have done; but our Saviour has given us sufficient caution not to judge of men by their pretences but by their Actions: A good and bad Tree may send forth branches alike, and both appear to the eye comely, and the only way to make a distinction betwixt them is by the different Taste of that fruit they bear; it being impossible for a good tree to bring forth Luke 6.43: evil fruit, or for a corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit. Whensoever therefore we observe men to be

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Covetous and full of Ambition, to allow Superstition and Idolatry, to be Factors for Schism and Rebellion; when we see them manage the firing of Cities, endeavour to promote Tumults, subvert Monarchies, murder Kings, let them talk as much as they please of the glory of God, by their Fruits we know them; they are Ravenous Wolves in Sheeps clothing, they will never lead their followers into the Kingdom of Heaven, nor come thither themselves. Now if such a way of arguing against the *Papists* and such like Pretenders to True Religion be just and equitable, what great care ought we to take that we do not give them occasion to make use of the same against our selves: We see how they have mis-represented all our actions, and what endeavours they use to render odious to the world our most just proceedings, and that necessary provision we make for our own security; and therefore nothing could be a greater gratification to them at this time than to see us act any thing which is either contrary to that duty which we owe to God, or that Allegiance which is due to our Sovereign: What pleasure would they reap from an Insurrection or popular tumult? Neither is it improbable but some of them would be glad that others of their Party suffer'd the greatest injuries imaginable, even death it self, if it were but effected after some manner that was

was irregular and forbidden by the laws of justice and equity ; for by this means they would have just reason to exclaim against us, and to represent us to the world as Hypocrites and as men who had as little sense of True Religion as themselves. The proper design of Christianity is to render men kind and tender-hearted, full of mercy and compassion, forbearing one another, forgiving one another ; to teach them to repress and subdue all lusts and affections, to contemn the empty pleasures of a deceitful world, and to hunger and thirst after True righteousness, to be meek and humble, submissive to Government and always ready to pay honour where honour is due, to be patient and contented in all circumstances, and to be willing to endure the greatest troubles and misfortunes for the sake of Christ rather than do any thing contrary to his Precepts. This is the Religion of the Blessed Jesus, and they who profess to be of it, and yet disobey it in any particular, both render it contemptible and themselves vile and despised in the sight of the world. In vain do we call ourselves Protestants if we live otherwise than becomes True Christians : Neither shall we ever be able to excuse our selves either to God or Man, if to keep out Popery, we are not afraid

wilfully to commit any sin or wickedness. Such a way of proceeding as it would on the one hand confirm the Proselytes of Popery, and hinder them from renouncing their gross absurdities, so would it on the other hand harden the Atheist in his loose and debatich'd principles, who with more boldness than formerly would assert, that Religion was a trick of State, since the most Zealous Professors of it took so little care to observe its Precepts; and that Heaven and the pleasures of another world were only Fable and Romance, since they who talk'd so much of them (whether Papists or Protestants) had nevertheless such a tender regard to the comforts of this life, and so kind a respect for their present Estates and Fortunes, that for the preservation of these latter they did not scruple venturing the forfeiture of the former. If therefore we have any kindness for that Religion we profess, if we would not make the name of Protestants as despicable as that of *Papists*; if we would stop the mouths of profane men, and daily bring over Proselytes to that Church whereof we are members, let us keep within those bounds of Duty which are set us, and although our condition may appear desperate, let us resolve not to uphold it by any other means than what are allowed by God himself:

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His Glory will be sooner advanced and True Religion better propagated by suffering wrong than doing wickedly. And therefore it was the constant practice of the Primitive Christians to submit to the most cruel Tortures rather than by doing any unwarrantable action strive to avoid them; neither were there any more severely censured amongst them than such who at any time for fear of Persecution warp'd from their duty by tamely complying with any Heathenish custom; nothing being more Scandalous than for Religious Professors to be guilty of such practises as are most manifestly repugnant to their own Principles.

3. Consider, That to do evil, although for our own preservation, instead of procuring our Peace and Settlement would be most likely to unsettle and ruin us; for having once broken down the fences of Duty which are plac'd about us, who can tell where we shall stop or abide? Having allow'd our selves the liberty of doing one sinful action we may easily be prompted on to commit a thousand; for the same pretences will justify all sins alike, and if for the sake of Religion a tumult may lawfully be raised, a Rebellion also may be promoted: Nothing is more commendable than

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for us to be Zealously affected in a Good Cause; and we are oblig'd whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God; but we ought to be careful that out of a Praeposterous zeal for God's Glory we don't advance Satans kingdome; that when we would secure the Established Religion, we don't undermine it; that when we would defend the present Government, we are not led away by those who would subvert it; that whilst we run from Popery, we don't run beside Christianity, and at last arrive at ruine and confusion.

But why need I take much pains to recommend a duty not better known than practised in this place? You have by your Prudence and moderation given the greatest credit to the Protestant Religion, that has been perhaps since the beginning of the Reformation. Your late most wise Behaviour may sufficiently instruct the world what an advantage it is to have the liberty of reading the Bible, and how great a difference there is betwixt the Religion of Christians and that of *Jesuits*: In those countreys where Popery bears sway, how many in cold blood have been murder'd for refusing to comply with Superstition and Idolatry, and what vast numbers have been butcher'd by the Inquisitors

litors upon pretence of such Conspiracies of which they themselves have been the Contrivers? But You notwithstanding the demonstration of a *Plot*, and as great Provocations as ever yet were heard of, have nevertheless, like sober men and good Christians, hitherto stood still: Your houses have been fired about your ears, the murder of your Prince designed, , the subversion of your Laws and Religion intended, and the utter ruine of You all almost compleated, and yet although it is manifest enough by what party all this has been contriv'd, yet such has been Your wisdom that you have not run into any extravagance, nor been guilty of the least outragious or tumultuous action: Thousands of your enemies breath the same air with your selves, nor has any of them suffer'd the least injury but what has been inflicted by the Publick justice of the Nation. God be praised that in a degenerate Age there has been found so much Meekness, Charity, and such a due sense of God and Religion. If ever any of late came nigh the Primitive Christians in respect of this particular, You are the men, in that like them amidst the greatest fears you remain immoveable, and notwithstanding the most dismal apprehensions of imminent dangers have firmly resolved according to the rule in the Gospel, not to do evil that good may come; what can

can be more pleasing to God than for you to persist in the same mind? neither ought such your behaviour to be reckon'd the least argument why you may justly hope that God will take you into his Care and Protection, that he will watch over this City day and night, that he will give his Angels charge over you to keep you in all his ways.

Having thus declared how we are to set ourselves and why to stand still, I come in the third place to shew, that Repentance and Amendment of Life being suppos'd, we have all the reason in the world to hope that we shall *see the salvation of God.*

For consider in the first place, that although we be in great danger, God hath nevertheless sufficient power to save and deliver us; He who sits upon the circles of the earth, and beholdeth the Inhabitants thereof as Grashoppers, He who searcheth all mens hearts and understandeth the imaginations of all their thoughts, He who ruleth the raging of the sea and stilleth the waves thereof when they arise, can (if he pleases) amidst our greatest troubles and distresses work a deliverance for us, and bring us out of darkness and the shadow of death, and break all our bonds in funder. Is our enemies

*Isa. 40. 22.
1 Chr. 28.*

*9.
P. 89. 9.*

emies strength and interest great? he can lessen it. Is their malice inveterate? he can asswage it: Are their Plots and Conspiracies carried on with much cunning and secretie? he can detect them: Are there amongst us those who upon the pretence of friendship, or of being enemies to Popery, advise things contrary to our preservation? he can confound the counsels of such *Achitophels*, and render ineffectual their most subtle contrivances: Would the life of our Sovereign contribute much to our preservation? God can give him a long life as well as shorten their dayes who have been the promoters of his and our ruine: If he thinks fit to appear in the behalf of his Anointed, his hand shall establish him, and his arm shall strengthen him; the enemy shall not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him; he will beat down his foes before his face and plague them that hate him; he will make him his first-born higher than the Kings of the earth. Would our safety much depend upon the prudence of those to whom the managery of publick affairs is committed? he can suggest to their minds wholsom and serious thoughts; he can inspire them with a spirit of wisdom and counsel; he can encline them to Temperance and moderation, and beget within them such a readiness to comply one with another,

*Ps. xl. 89.
21, 22.*

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another, such a willingness to condescend in things indifferent and of lesser moment, that all prejudice and passion, all self-interest and desire of revenge being laid aside, all quarrels and differences compos'd; they shall unanimously conspire together to promote the publick welfare; and by that means gain an opportunity of enacting such good and wholesome Laws as may hinder Popes and *Jesuits* notwithstanding all their art and cunning from doing us at present any further mischief. And yet these are but few of those methods which God can use for our deliverance; his Counsels being unsearchable, and his ways past finding out: and therefore upon this account we have no reason to despair, if by our hearty repentance and amendment of life, by turning from the evil of our ways, and returning to the Lord, we endeavour to procure his blessing and gracious providence towards us.

And this will further appear in the Second place, if we consider, the design of Gods sending Judgments upon any Nation. Nothing is more manifest from Scripture than that God doth not desire the ruine of sinners; his frequent calls and invitations to Repentance, his many promises of mercy and forgivenes do sufficiently testify his great unwillingness to punish offenders, neither does he ever decree the final destruction

struction of any people unless he find an universal degeneracy amongst them, unless he observe a more than ordinary contempt of Religion and all manner of vertue, unless he perceive them to make a trade of sinning, to be obstinate and incorrigible notwithstanding all means used to reclaim them; had there been Ten Righteous found in *Sodom* it had not been destroy'd; had not the *Jews* fill'd up the measure of their Fathers iniquity they might have been a Nation unto this day; Indeed if men will resolve to be irreligious and prophane, if they will continue to abuse mercies confer'd upon them, if they will persist to neglect God's judgments and to slight his corrections, in such a case it's high time that he appear for the vindication of his honour, and that in a most plentiful manner he pour upon them the Vials of his wrath which they have treasur'd up to themselves by their abominable and unheard of provocations. But at other times Gods dealing severely with a nation is for other ends and purposes, to wit, to awaken them out of the Lethargie of sin, and to excite within them a sober sense of Duty and Religion, to make them reflect upon their own actions, and attend more seriously to the dictates of Reason and Conscience, to try their patience and humility, to wean them from the pleasures and satisfactions

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of this life, to shew them their own weakness and infirmities, and thereby engage them in all their distresses to rely upon him for favour and protection. These are some of those ends which God proposes to himself when he sends his judgments into the world, and therefore we observe that upon a peoples repentance and amendment he has often either suspended or at least deferred those punishments he intended to inflict upon them, and at other times has lessen'd and remov'd those which have been inflicted : so that our safety depends upon our own choice, and if we be ruin'd we may thank our selves ; for if as was at first supposed we have behaved our selves under Gods corrections as we ought to have done, if like the *Israelites* here in the Text we have stood before the Lord with fear and trembling, if with tears and fastings we have loathed our selves in his sight for our iniquities and for our abominations, if we have heartily prayed unto him for succour and relief, if we have made firm resolutions of being for the future more just and honest, more chaste and temperate, more religious and devout, more kind and charitable, more patient and humble, notwithstanding the greatest temptations, crosses, and afflictions which may happen to us ; if in short the fear of Gods threatening have produced in us those effects which

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Ezek. 36.

31.

he thereby intended, we should sin against his goodness and veracity should we despair of safety and deliverance, he having most solemnly declared by his Prophet *Jeremiah* (18. 7.) That at what instant he shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, to pull down and to destroy it, if that nation against whom he hath pronounced turn from their evil, he will repent of the evil that he thought to do unto them.

3. Another argument why we may hope to see the salvation of the Lord, may be fetcht from those discoveries he has made of the design of our enemies. Wholsoever considers with what secrecie and contrivance the late Conspiracy was carried on, and how nigh being accomplished, cannot but conclude that the discovery thereof was the Lord's doing, and that it ought to be marvellous in all mens eyes ; if therefore when ruine was so near God has saved us, it is a sign that at present he does not intend our destruction, but that unless we harden our hearts and resolve to continue obstinate in our impenitency, we may by his mercy and assistance, and our own honest endeavours find a way to escape. It was a great kindness shewn to *Niniveh*, and a certain argument of God's unwillingness to destroy that

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City, that he sent his Prophet to forewarn them of their ruine: the like kindness God hath shewn to us; For what else is the Discovery of the *Plot* but a Proclamation like that of *Jonah's*, Yet a little while and *England* shall be destroy'd? If then we do not abuse this his mercy and forbearance, if like the *Ninivites*, we bring forth fruits fit for Repentance, we may lawfully hope that he will be again reconcil'd, and that he will remove those great evils he had resolv'd to inflict upon us.

4. We may fetch another Argument for our preservation from the nature of that Religion we profess; and here it will not be improper to make use of another part of the Prophet's message, and to bespeak one the other as he did the people of *Judah*, Let us not be dismay'd, for the battel is not ours but Gods. The design of our enemies is not against particular persons but against that Religion we profess, and that Church of which we are members. Now why should we imagine that God will suffer That Church which was founded upon the bloud of Martyrs, and spread it self by the Sufferings of thole who were its first Proselytes; That Church which has from time to time produced such eminent examples of Learning, Virtue and

true

true Piety; That Church where all things are done with so much decency and order; That Church whose Doctrines and Principles are so conformable to God's Word, so agreeable to the Sentiments of Primitive and Holy men, and so fitly adapted to promote the True ends of Christianity in the world, Peace and godliness; Lastly, That Church which his own right hand hath planted, and which after so miraculous a manner he hath often preserv'd, to be utterly ruined by its enemies, unless we who are the members thereof by our continued rebellions prove the occasion of its destruction? Does God (do we think) take delight in Superstition and Idolatry? is he pleas'd with lies and murders? has he voucht Transubstantiation and Purgatory? ought we to disbelieve our senses or burn our Bibles? are Popes infallible or *Je-suits* holy men? if these things be true, welcome Popery! it will be the greatest blessing which can happen to this Nation: but if otherwise, we need not question but that God will arise and maintain his own cause, defend his own Religion, unless prevented by our slothfulness, by our impenitency and base ingratitude: Our enemies force would be very inconsiderable did not we assist them with a party against our selves: they are our Prejudices and Passions, our lusts

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lusts and affections, our sins and iniquities which render their power so formidable : neither will God permit a Religion so Fabulous and Romantick, so contrary to his revealed will and Commandments, so destructive of all Morality and True Piety, to prevail and be settled among us; unless our Atheism and Prophaneness, our luxury and intemperance, our injustice and knavery, our pride and covetousness, our hypocrisy and ambition, our malice and uncharitableness have provoked him to exercise the utmost of his wrath and fury against us. He has a tender regard for that Religion which he sent his Son into the world on purpose to promote and propagate, and the removal of his Candlestick from a Nation is the worst of Judgments which can be inflicted, and therefore we may assure ourselves, that he will not suffer it to happen to us, unless we weary and tire his mercy and goodness by refusing to hearken to his voice in the day when he calls for repentance and amendment of life.

Since therefore our condition is not so desperate as was imagined, since from God's power to help us, from his design in threatening of Judgments, from the discoveries of our enemies intentions, and from the nature of that Reli-

Religion we profess, we have good grounds to hope for safety and deliverance, let us improve the opportunity of Repentance which is before us to the best advantage ; let every man descend into his own breast, let him search and try all his ways, enquire wherein he has offended God, and be instant at Heaven gates for pardon and forgiveness ; In short let us all resolve to sin no more, but to live for the future as becomes good Christians, nothing being more probable than that such our behaviour may avert those Judgements which seem to threaten us ; but if it does not we have no reason to be dismied or troubled, since we may have sufficient confidence that we have hereby preserv'd our better part, our immortal Soul, and that if we do not in this life, we shall nevertheless see the Salvation of the Lord in the world to come.

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